

7 635. THEAT. V. 49.
THE
ARTFUL WIFE.

A
COMEDY.

As it is ACTED at the
THEATRE
IN

Little Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

Written by
Mr. TAVERNER.

*Let such teach others who themselves excell,
And Censure freely who have written well.*

Pope's Ess. on Crit.

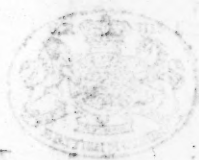
L O N D O N:

Printed for, and sold by J. ROBERTS, near the
Oxford Arms in Warwick-Lane, 1718.

THE NEW

COMEDY

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PROLOGUE.

THE Time has been that Bards, in tripple League,
Club'd Wit to furnish out one Play's Intrigue;
But when the Product of their Pens was shewn,
'Twas plain that All was new, and All their Own,
Unlike to these fair Candidates in Fame,
Our modern Authors shuffle in their Claim;
Assume the Thoughts, the Language, and the Plot,
Ev'n when All's stol'n from Scenes long since forgot.
For here and there, they Scraps and Remnants take,
And form a Play as Housewives Patch work make.

Our Author, lest the Criticks in their Spleen
Should say, that he has robb'd some ancient Scene,
To top a Plot upon you, not his Own,
Produces now a Comedy—— with None:
Nor has he brought one Fool upon the Stage,
With awkward Airs your Laughter to engage:
No Country-Booby, nor affected Beau,
Those Monsters in Dramatick Raree-Show!
No, he intends to please a different Way,
To try the Force of Scenes genteely Gay:
And boldly hopes, but, as in Chancery,
Hopes—— with Submission to this Court's Decree,
That Nature, strip'd of Farce and Ridicule,
Is no Exception to the Comick Rule:
Then force him not to blush, or yet begin
A sad Repentance for this scribbling Sin:
You, who have giv'n his Artful Husband Life,
Cannot, in Manners, damn his Artful Wife.

E P I-

EPILOGUE.

S*Till as the Heroine of the Tragick Scene,
In Recompence of all her Rage, or Spleen,
Is, at the last, to close her Glories up,
Dispatch'd by Dagger, or the poison'd Cup :
So, when the Comick Poet shews away
His favo'r ite Damsel, spirituous and gay,
To mortify her in the shining Part,
He, with a Husband, stabs her to the Heart.*

*What strange revengeful Things these Writers are !
Spiteful as Criticks, and as seldom spare !
Who ever, when their Wit, or Plot miscarry,
Because they cannot kill, will make us marry.—
Thank Heav'n, for this one Comfort of our Lives,
We've some Revenge, in turn, by—being Wives :
And tho' to Wedding we are oft constrain'd,
That due Decorum may be well maintain'd,
To drop some Airs and Freedoms in our Carriage,
The Priviledges Maids must lose in Marriage ;
Yet when the Husband comes to count his Gains,
He feels—th' industrious Wife has tak'n some Pains,
To make the Change sit easy, and rebate
The Rigour of the Matrimonial State.*

Well

Well, but suppose this happens, now and then,
Must you, censorious, and ill-judging Men,
Because you've heard some Women have done so,
Interpret for the Sex from One or Two?
When your own treach'rous Arts and Oaths prevail,
First to seduce, and then to make us frail;
We should, but that I would not be severe,
Wish you all Wives, like this stiff Madam here.
That when your flatt'ring Falsehood has betray'd,
The Innocence of a too cred'lous Maid,
You, like Sir Francis, to repair her Fame,
May be oblig'd to Wed, and pocket up your Shame.

D R A.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

M E N.

Lord Absent.

Mr. Keenè.

Sir Francis Courtal.

Mr. Christoph. Bullock.

Mr. Lovell.

Mr. Leigh.

W O M E N.

Lady Absent.

Mrs. Rogers.

Lady Harriet.

Mrs. Thurmond.

Mrs. Ruth.

Mrs. Bullock.

Mrs. Forward.

Mrs. Spillar.

Gentleman to Lord Absent.

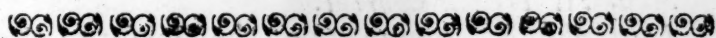
Servant to Lord Absent.

S C E N E *Lord Absent's House.*

T H E



T H E
Artful W I F E.



A C T. I.

S C E N E *Lord Absent's House.*

Lord Absent discover'd at a Table undress'd.



OW unnecessary is Thought !
What Confusion has it occasion'd !
What Animosities has it rais'd in
the World ! The Philosophers of
Old, by that means, set up different
Sects, and, with mistaken
Zeal, oppos'd each other :—Why, it supports
Ambition, Violence, Oppression, Avarice, Jealousy,
Contention, and all Ills : It is the Cause
of modern Feuds, confounds Religion, and
makes Men mad. The Schoolman's Bawd, to
usher into his labouring Brain Millions of Contradictions,
and with sophistick Art destroys his
B Quiet.

The Artful Wife.

Quiet. — Who would Think? for, if Thought be absent, the Mind's serene, and cannot be molested. 'Tis a Curse given to keep our Follies waking, only to teize and vex us. — My Wife is virtuous, my Friends just, my Servants honest; I have a plentiful Estate to support me and my Family, and wherewith to gratify each requesting Appetite. What have I to do with Thought? My Soul shall lodge at Ease within its Tenement: I'll not be my own Tormentor.

Enter Servant.

Serv. Sir Francis Courtal.

Lord Abs. Ay, you may put the Horses to the Coach.

Serv. Sir Francis Courtal's below.

Lord Abs. What says your Lady?

Serv. Why, Sir Francis Courtal is come to wait on you.

' *Lord Abs.* Odso, I had forgot. But 'tis no Matter.

Serv. (aside.) Thus 'tis always. He never takes Notice of what is said to him under a Quarter of an Hour, and is ever absent from those that speak to him. — *Sir Francis Courtal.*

' *Lord Abs.* Ha, what dost thou say?

' *Serv. Sir Francis Courtal.*

Lord Abs. Well.

Serv. Is below.

Lord Abs. Let him come up. [*rises from his Chair.* *Exit Serv.*

Enter

The Artful Wife.

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Enter Sir Francis Courtal.

Sir Fran. I am your Lordship's most humble Servant. What, not dress'd yet? Why, all the World's abroad, engag'd in Business or Pleasure. The grand Politicians are laying Schemes over Bohec and Tobacco; Men of Dress and Fashion ogling themselves in the great Glass at the Chocolate-Houses, 'parading in their gilt Chariots, 'or bowing in the Drawing-Room;' the Wits sneering at and satyrising each other at *Will's* and *Burton's*; Trade has got half it's Days Journey almost, 'and the Ladies throng to the China 'Houses, to chuse Knick-knacks for their Closets, full of Expectation to see the dear Creatures their stern Husbands, cruel Fathers, 'watchful Mothers, and careful Guardians, won't 'permit 'em to meet at home;' the World's 'busy, and only you are idle in the midst of Action.

Lord Abs. Why, ay.

Sir Fran. May I never be smil'd upon by the Fair, if I didn't catch that stiff Prude, my Lady *Formal*, at the Play last Night, distributing Favours round the House, and yet sets up for a Platonic; my Lady *Straitlac'd* simpering at a Friend; Madam *Freebody* laughing immoderately at all the double Entendres, while some put on a demure Face to shew the quickness of their Apprehension; two or three City Ladies gaping and staring as if they would have devoured the Players; and the Side Boxes were handsomly set out with Hats and Feathers, lac'd Coats and Quality; each boldly assaulting with Darts of Assurance, the mark'd Fair he levy'd his Addreses at,

B 2

Lord

Lord Abs. I think you was in the right ; I like your Judgment.

Sir Fran. After the Play, I waited on my Lady *Gaylove* and, her two Daughters home, where we pull'd the whole Town in pieces : The Ladies oblig'd me with the Character of their Sex, and I return'd the Favour with those of ours.

Lord Abs. You may do so an you will : It does not signify, but——

Sir Fran. Before Gad, my Lord, you would n't believe it, but it's most certainly true, there is not a Man or Woman of any Distinction can stand a critical Examination.

Lord Abs. Very true.

Sir Fran. The Dress of my Lady *Frightful*, the over-acted Freedom of Mrs. *Flippant*, the stern Look of Mrs. *Dauntlove*, the Simper of Mrs. *Manbred*, the cast-down Look of my Lady *Treadwell*, the Amble, the Trip, the Toss, the Twyre of others. They all have their particular Affectations, and think 'em as much their own as the Cloaths they wear ; and if one happens to step into another's manner of Behaviour, they are as angry as if they had been robbed of their Jewels, and try 'em regularly at the Tea Tables for Indecency, want of Breeding and Ill-Manners, and condemn 'em as ignorant Creatures, because they are not Originals themselves.

Lord Abs. Very necessary Observations truly. How do you like that *Titian*, it's strongly painted, and the Groope is fine.

Sir Fran. Then I pull'd the Men in pieces, spar'd no Body, and ' had much ado to let my self scape, so delightful is Scandal.

Lord

The Artful Wife.

5

‘ Lord *Abs.* How excellent is that Battle!
‘ [*pointing.*] Each Figure seems to live and be in
‘ Action, and by the Pencil’s Force, you behold
‘ War and Desolation in all its various Shapes!’
Ha! But I hope you had some regard for your
Friends.

Sir Fran. No faith, who can we better satyrise
than those we are most intimate with.

‘ Lord *Abs.* That Flower-Piece—— What a
‘ Bloom it bears. They only want the Smell to
‘ make ’em perfect.

Sir Fran. I began with my Lord *Supple*, who
bows to every Body, smiles upon every Body,
promises every Body, yet performs to no Body;
whose Levee is made up of his Petitioners, and
when their Patience is tir’d, walk off, to make
room for a new Set, not daring to let fall one
Word awry, for fear of *Scandalum Magnatum*.

Lord *Abs.* Say you so?

Sir Fran. ‘ Then I must own, the gay young
‘ Fellows of Birth and Fortune, are so damn’d
‘ Vain, they suppose all the Ladies admire ’em.
‘ With what Insolence have I seen some of ’em
‘ look on a Woman of Twenty Five, as if she
‘ were fit for nothing but a Country Gentleman
‘ to carry down to his Mansion House, to look
‘ after his Farm and Family, be his head Ser-
‘ vant; for which Post, she brings a large For-
‘ tune to repair his mortgag’d Estate, and pay
‘ off the Hereditary Debts of his Ancestors.’ In
short, we ran through all the Inhabitants of the
Mall, Hyde Park and Assemblies.

Lord *Abs.* There’s a Wreck. [*pointing*] How
the Sea rowls! Was Lightning ever so express’d?
Does it not create a Horror? It’s real Motion.
——Ay, you should let ’em know their Faults
that they might mend. Ha!

Sir

Sir Fran. Pho, pox, I should lose the greatest Pleasure in Life, if the World were virtuous and wise: The Ladies would have nothing to brag of, and we should have no Body to corrupt or deceive.

Lord Abs. Ay, — an excellent way of Reasoning.

Sir Fran. To praise is only becoming a begging Author, a poor Courtier, or an obsequious Lover. It's never given, but lent, in hopes of a Return.

Lord Abs. True.

Sir Fran. Her Ladyship's well this Morning, I hope? How does the Lady *Harriet*, your Sister? 'Are they at home, or have they made a Tour to Court? 'Well, the most Discreet love to 'shew themselves when they are compleatly finish'd, and well dress'd.' What Gaiety, what Spirit, Beauty and Wit without Affectation, is Lady *Harriet* possess'd of! All die for her, whilst she, unconcern'd, permits their Addresses, and laughs at Love in every Shape. The whining Lover becomes her Jest, the Pert she banters, the Gay she's merry with, the Grave she smiles at, but the ignorant Fop she despises. There is a way to win all Women, but, 'gad, her weak Side is undiscover'd yet; for, when you think you have got possession of the Outworks, she springs a Mine, blows up the Lodgment, and you are left to begin again, having only flatter'd your self with a seeming Advantage.

Lord Abs. You'll find it a difficult Task to make her sensible your Passion's fit to be entertain'd, and perswade her to a return.

Sir Fran.

The Artful Wife.

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Sir Fran. Your Lady is a Woman of Breeding; my Lady *Harriet* so compleat, their Example would refine the most awkward: But Mrs. *Ruth*, her Ladyship's Niece, is incorrigibly conceited, and so possess'd with a Puritanick Zeal and City Formality, in which she was brought up, that she looks upon it as a Point of Faith to persevere, and would not go out of that despicable Path, to be Lady of the Bed-Chamber. The Women at this End of the Town are hideous to her, and the Men Devils incarnate: She believes there's no Manners, Virtue or Religion but within *Temple-Bar*.

Lord Abs. Ay, now you put me in Mind, it is so. I'll marry her to some Citizen, and then she'll be at home again.

Sir Fran. The sooner the better; she'll make an excellent Wife for a Banker, a Haberdasher of Small-Wares, a *Norwich* Factor, or a Wholesale Cheesemonger.

Enter Lord Absent's Gentleman.

Gent. Will your Lordship please to dress?

Lord Abs. Where's my Shoes?

Gent. They are on, my Lord.

Lord Abs. Right.—My Neckcloth.—

Gent. 'Tis about your Neck.

Lord Abs. Oh, well enough. Come, give me my Coat and Waistcoat, *[going to pull off his Night-Gown.*

Gent. They are ready in your Dressing Room.

Lord Abs. Very well. *[Exit Ld Abs. and Gent.*

Sir Fran. One would think no Woman provok'd with so stupid a Husband as my Lord, could refuse a gentile Offer: How forceably does he

he argue for his own Cuckoldom. — Her Ladyship does not dislike me, I'm satisfy'd, by the Reception she has given my Advances. — The Sister's beautiful, and I must have her, tho' I pawn my Liberty for her. There's the most difficult Undertaking! Then I have promis'd Marriage to Mrs. *Ruth*, her Ladyship's Niece, for which she paid down her Honour to bind the Bargain; but that's not worth thinking of. Well, I have more Bus'ness upon my Hands than a Statesman, Projector or Chymist. — Now, *Venus* assist me, and be propitious to me *Cupid*, thou darling Son of Beauty, and I'm thy Votary for ever.

[*going.*

Enter Ruth.

Ruth. Sir *Francis*, if you are not in too much haste, I should take it as an Obligation if you'd bestow a Minute or two on me.

Sir Fran. Ay, Child, what would you have with me?

Ruth. I am something surpris'd at your present Neglect and careless Behaviour to me in private, tho' I own, in publick, Decency and Caution is necessary; for Levity of Carriage before sinful Observers is not Discretion.

Sir Fran. Right. To throw Dust in the Eyes of Censure is proper, and those of your Party do it most artfully.

Ruth. Wicked, fleeing, amorous, ogling and vitious Freedoms are the Corruption of the Mind, which prepare it for all Evil.

Sir Fran. I advise you to shun Pride and Vanity, Equipage and Pleasure: By no means don't contradict your own Inclinations, but speedily retire into the City.

Ruth. The

The Artful Wife.

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Ruth. The City is a Heavenly Place. Ah, but to leave you, Sir *Francis*, behind among the Ungodly, Oh what will become of you ! The City is the Throne of Justice, there Justice inhabits. — I shall wait impatiently till the Time shall come, when, Hand in Hand, it will be your Pleasure to retire from the wide Plains of Voluptuousness into the Enclosures of Uprightness, there to consummate the Resolution we have taken.

Enter Mrs. Forward, and listens.

Form. So, have I caught you at last ! I have had a shrewd Suspicion some Time, but now I shall know the Bottom of the Secret. — Odsso, can that formal Face venture to put on a Smile, and look so tenderly at a fine Gentleman ? — Good again — There's a Simper. Very fine — O rare ! — Here must be something very warm between 'em. *[Aside.]*

Sir Fran. My Inclinations and yours are as far asunder as the *Poles*, so different, we should make but an unhappy Conjunction. Faith, Mrs. *Ruth*, I think what has pass'd between us, we should both endeavour to forget. I have, I do assure you ; but shall always retain a complaisant Respect — and so forth, Child. *[Aside.]* This Interview will bring Matters to a Crisis, and I'll take this Opportunity to undeceive her — Marry her ! Ha, ha, poor Fool ! — Pox of her formal Fondness. — S death, a Man has more trouble to get rid of a Woman that has granted him the Favour, than to gain Twenty that have not.]

Form. What's past ! So, here's fine Doings !
(Aside.)

C

Ruth. I

Ruth. I hope, Sir *Francis*, you are a just, an honest, and a good Man, and will keep your Promises made to me upon so solemn an Occasion. Ay, upon my Resignation, the giving up of my Honour—the giving up of that a Woman of Steadfastness should have preserv'd till Grace had been said, and a Blessing crav'd for what we were about to receive. Take Notice, I answer not for it; the Frailty lies at your Door, the Door of the Tempter, till we shall be made One, according to Custom. Nay, there was a Pledge given and receiv'd to each other, and you won't fall from your Uprightness.

Sir Fran. Pho, Child, I tell you, you must think no more of it.

Ruth. Oh, I must remember it, I shall remember it, I have set my Heart upon it. You are mine: Do not entangle or ensnare me in the Nets of Wickedness, and leave me to be a Scoff unto Scorners, who will deride me even unto Shame and Bitterness.

Sir Fran. I'm a Man of Honour, and will hold my Tongue: The Devil's in it if you can't keep your own Counsel. Look'e, Madam, you shall marry some grave Citizen; come, come, you'll make a good Wife, as Wives go among them, for all this. I'll be your Friend, and visit you now and then, it's the Fashion; much gentiler and more agreeable, to supply the Defects of a Husband you don't love, with an humble Servant you do. Matrimony would make us hate one another, and pall the strongest Passion. Women of Sense never marry the Man they like, but retain him as a Gallant.—Oh the Delight of a stolen Hour or two in a Hackney-Coach, *Spring Gardens*, or a lone House in the midst of a Garden, at *Chel-*
sea,

The Artful Wife.

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sea, Fulham, or Kensington! How delicious the Fruit will Taste!—— While the good Man at home is thinking no harm, with his Head full of Freight, Bottom-Ree and Custom.

Form. I have enough, i'faith, my Lady shall know this. I'll interrupt 'em, [*comes forward*] My Lady waits for you, the Tea's ready. [*to Ruth.*

Sir Fran. Mrs. Forward, a good Morning to you.

Form. Your most humble Servant, Sir Francis.

Ruth. Tell her Ladyship, I'll wait upon her instantly. [*Mrs. Forward retires.*] Bless me, I hope she has not overheard us. Oh, Sir Francis, this is a crying Sin to delude me thus. Have you no Conscience?

Sir Fran. Enough to serve my turn.

Ruth. Does not Conscience fly in your Face?

Sir Fran. Faith, I keep my Countenance pretty well.

Ruth. What a Jewel is a clear Conscience!

Sir Fran. The Lawyer's Sham-Plea.

Ruth. An upright Conscience!

Sir Fran. The Statesman's Jest.

Ruth. A Quiet Conscience!

Sir Fran. The Tradesman's Day-Book.

Ruth. Oh, how can you abuse Conscience thus? Oh, oh!

Sir Fran. An agreeable Conscience is like a soft, supple Glove, you may pull it off and on without cracking the Seams; and is conveniently fitted to serve our Inclinations, and ought to be obedient upon all Occasions. Weeds will get the better of fine Flowers, if not rooted up, as your Conscience has got the better of your Understanding.

Ruth. Thou pervertest Conscience.

Sir Fran. When did you ever know the wife or learned Part of the World use it but as a Property to gain their Ends. It's like Fire and Water, a bad Master, but a good Servant, and gains that by Humility, that blunt Truth must go without, and sue in vain for.—— Upon my Conscience, says a Great Man, I'll provide for him, and let's him starve without Pity : Upon my Conscience, says some Body, 'twas no Simony, tho' the Living was well paid for : Upon my Conscience, says the Mantua-maker, your Ladyship has every Scrap put in, tho' a Token fetch'd three Yards to Mrs. *Pin-Tail's* Confusion. Your Taylor, your Sempstrefs, your Steward, your Draper, your Perruque-maker ; every Body has a convenient Conscience to serve their Turn.

Form. Her Ladiship's impatient.

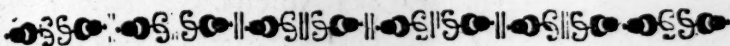
Ruth. How troublesome she is.

Sir Fran. ' I'll wait on you,

Ruth. ' Impertinent Creature.' She'll suspect something—I must go in. You'll drink a Dish of Tea with us, *Sir Francis* ?

Sir Fran. I'll attend you——and think my self happily reliev'd. [Exit ambo.]

Form. So, I find he has robb'd me of my Brokeridge, and taken up Goods on my Wharf clandestinely : But I'll be even with him. It's a Portion to be a Lady's Woman in some Places, ay, and they govern the House too, when once they come to be useful in the Family, and know who and who's together : But, i'faith, here they carry on their own Affairs, truly I believe, to save Money——But don't let 'em think I'll be content with cast Cloaths, standing Wages, and the Chaplain for a Lover. [Exit.]



A C T II.

S C E N E *continues.*

Enter Lady Absent.

HOW delightful is the Matrimonial State, when two Minds have but one Desire! What Harmony does it produce, inspir'd with Friendship, Love and Generosity! The meanest Condition may thus be made most happy. Methinks there should be but few bad Women, Virtue is so delightful.—There can be no just Provocation why a Wife should use a Husband ill: Pride and Folly cry for Revenge.—Perhaps he likes another,—neglects her for his Bottle, or some other worthless Toy.—But of whom will she be reveng'd?—Upon her self:—Can his want of Honour be a Reason why she should sacrifice her own? No. The Men by Custom regain their Reputation when they but seem to mend: Woman's once lost is never to be found again, it dies for ever. Rags may boast of Virtue as a true Ornament, but Pollution turns all the Pomp of Life to abject Poverty. What can be more provoking than my Lord's Behaviour? It's an ill Habit, the Jaundice of the Mind, and must be cur'd! How base is Sir *Francis's* Attempt upon my Person and his Friend's Honour!—My Lord sees it not—Were he not so careless and so absent in his Temper, he's the only Man I could wish to have wed.

Enter

Enter Lord Absent.

Lady Abs. O my dear, how do you like my Fancy? I think it is an odd, uncommon Figure, and the Cloaths become me. (*shewing her Cloaths.*)

Lord Abs. Well enough.

Lady Abs. The Shades are pretty, and the Mixture of the Colours gentile; an agreeable Variety which take the Eye.

Lord Abs. I think so.

Lady Abs. Are you for the Play to Night? I have a mind to see it: The Court will be there. We Women can't rest without shewing our new Cloaths; for when they are prais'd, we take it as a Complement paid to our Persons and Understanding,

Lord Abs. I believe I shall dine at home.

Lady Abs. Fye, my dear, how odly you answer me.

Lord Abs. I can't tell.

Lady Abs. This is unkind.

Lord Abs. Very well.

Lady Abs. You won't hear me.

Lord Abs. What do you say?

Lady Abs. That this Usage is worse than ill Nature.

Lord Abs. Ha, Child.

Lady Abs. You are an Out-of-the-way Creature.

Lord Abs. No, no, don't mind it.

Lady Abs. It's intollerable, how can I think you have any regard for me.

Lord Abs. Pho, pho.

Lady Abs. I dare swear you never think of me.

Lord Abs. Faith I do.

Lady Abs.

The Artful Wife.

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Lady Abs. It's impossible, when you thus neglect me.

Lord Abs. Prithee, *Nan*, don't be such a Fool. I tell you I do love you

Lady Abs. You, even now, are at Cross-Purposes, and don't know it.

Lord Abs. You are mistaken.

Lady Abs. You have not so much as made me one direct Answer.

Lord Abs. You only fancy so.

Enter Sir Francis.

Sir Fran. There's *Lady Harriet* and *Mrs. Ruth* engag'd in a warm Argument. *St. James's* and the City are the Foundation. No two Council at the Bar ever wrangled more to support their contrary Opinions.

Lady Abs. They are labouring to convert each other, but they are meer Bigots, and resolv'd beforehand, never to be convinc'd.

Lord Abs. Shall we take a little Air, *Sir Francis*, it's a fine Morning?

Sir Fran. You would not leave the Ladies alone.

Lady Abs. You are very Complaisant, *Sir Francis*.

Sir Fran. Who can be otherwise, to so much Beauty and good Humour?

Lady Abs. To praise a Wife before some Husbands would give 'em occasion to believe you intended a further Freedom.

Sir Fran. His Lordship's a Man of another Temper; and your Merit ought not to go without it's due

Lady Abs. I hope his Behaviour does not encourage your Freedom.

Sir Fran.

Sir Fran. Good Manners can never offend.

Lady Absf. When it's without Design.

Sir Fran. Who can help Inclination?

Lady Absf. If corrupt, you should correct it.

Sir Fran. Reason is but the Forlorn Hope, when Passion has gain'd an Advantage.

Lady Absf. But you should rally your Reason, and not let it be over-power'd by the Torrent of Desire.

Sir Fran. Conquest is glorious, and Victory is what I have set my Heart upon.

Lady Absf. Have a care I don't lay an Ambuscade for you.

Sir Fran. I should be proud to fall into one of your contriving: You would not use me ill, you are too generous.

Lady Absf. You may be deceiv'd.

Sir Fran. The Deceit must be delightful, when the Deceiver has so much power to charm.

Lord Absf. Prithee no more; it's all thrown away upon my Wife.

Lady Absf. I shall let your Friend, my Lord, know how much he's oblig'd to you. *[goes to*

Lord Absent.

Sir Fran. Not with that Smile. She understands me, and it does not displease her. I shall soon be well with her. If I can but draw her into a little Contempt of him, my Bus'ness is done. *[aside.*

Lord Absf. As you will. *[to Lady Absent.*

Lady Absf. I never saw such Negligence. Try, *Sir Francis*, what you can do.

Sir Fran. It will be all to no purpose, therefore I think, you should turn the Tables upon him, and entertain me as your obedient humble Servant to chat with you, to go abroad with, be merry with, and so forth.

Lady Absf.

The Artful Wife.

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Lady Abf. To begin with Trifles often draws those into deep Play, who intended to Set nothing worth being uneasy about. And you Sharpers never regard your best Friends in your Way of Bus'ness.

Sir Fran. You have another Opinion of me.

Lady Abf. You seem very like one of those fair fac'd, honest, well spoken Gentlemen.

Lord Abf. What, are you humming over the Tune, *Sir Francis*, by way of Practice, that you may be the more perfect when you come to perform in earnest?

Sir Fran. Only trying how the Notes will found. [Sings.]

Lord Abf. Ay, you make my Wife the Kit to practise upon, though you don't design her for the Instrument to play upon in Consort. Ha, is not that it?

Lady Abf. Was there ever so much Assurance!

Lord Abf. Will you go——Ha?

Sir Fran. Ay, presently, when I have gone through the Lesson.

Lord Abf. Prithee come away, and leave off fooling. [Exit.]

Lady Abf. His Lordship expects you, don't you intend to go with him?

Sir Fran. Not till I have perswaded you to pity him you have made your Slave.

Lady Abf. Yes, and injure my self, by giving away all at once, like a Prodigal, that should support me ever after.

Sir Fran. Would you not heal the Wound you have made?

Lady Abf. With my Advice.

Sir Fran. Misers freely part with that, because it costs 'em nothing,

D

Lady Abf.

Lady Abs. That's sometimes of more Value than their Money.

Sir Fran. You may as well forbid the Fire to burn, the Winds to blow, the Sea to rage, as Passion not to speak.

Lady Abs. You displease me now.

Sir Fran. Think not I would disturb the
' smoothness of that sweet Calm that dwells upon
' your Brow, but watch your Smiles, and gather
' greedily the Bliss that hangs, like Dew, on every
' Feature, to quench my Flame.

Lady Abs. Fifteen and Five and Twenty are
' not to be attempted the same Way.' Young Girls
are taken with gingling Words, gaudy Sentences,
soft Speeches, tender Airs, and other Toys, but
riper Years know all your Arts and Counterfeits.
——He that truly loves, fears to offend, and silently
bemoans his Fate, till kind Chance betrays his
Passion, which he endeavours still to hide.

Sir Fran. You cannot be so cruel to doubt——

Lady Abs. Nor you so void of Reason to think
you can persuade.

Sir Fran. I must hope.

Lady Abs. In vain.

Sir Fran. You only say so; but I shall perse-
vere——

Lady Abs. Not to Martyrdom.

Sir Fran. You would not have me hang or
drown my self?

Lady Abs. There's not much Danger of either.
But if you should, that would be a convincing
Proof, I must own. Then, perhaps, I might
pity you,

Sir Fran. Is that all the Generosity you are
Mistress of?

Lady Abs.

Lady Abs. Yes; and enough too. Who would willingly be deceiv'd?

Sir Fran. Suspicion, where there is no Ground, is a vain Chimera.

Lady Abs. It's a certain Guard.

Sir Fran. What signifies keeping Centry when no Enemy's near?

Lady Abs. A false Friend is more dangerous.

Sir Fran. A Lover and a Friend are double Ties.

Lady Abs. When the Lover's cur'd, the other cools o'Course.

Sir Fran. You must have but a mean Opinion of Mankind.

Lady Abs. Why, really, I think, they deserve it.

Sir Fran. What, all?

Lady Abs. All.

Sir Fran. I wish you'd except me.

Lady Abs. By no means, that would be partial, and give you an opportunity to laugh at my Credulity.

Sir Fran. When I prove false——

Lady Abs. What then?

Sir Fran. Why——

Lady Abs. I shall look like a Fool.

Sir Fran. Never.

Lady Abs. No, no, not before you have obtain'd——

Sir Fran. Nor after.

Lady Abs. Was you never cloy'd?

Sir Fran. Not with your Favours,

Lady Abs. Nor never shall. [*aside.*] Nor no Body's else?

Sir Fran. All former Inclinations are vanquish'd; they fled when you took possession: And now you Tyrannise.

Lady Abs. Have you not said all this, and more to Lady Harriet, my Lord's Sister, and does not she Tyrannise in her Turn over your vanquish'd Inclinations?

Sir Fran. 'Tis cruel to make a Crime of that, which is only a pretence to prevent Suspicion, and turn the Eyes of the too Curious from observing my Passion for you, which I would conceal from all the World but your dear self.

Lady Abs. Subtle Devil! [*aside.*] The Treachery may be meant rather to me than her; for she is beautiful, young, gay, and in her Bloom of Virgin Charms; and has more power to tempt than I can boast of.

Sir Fran. Your very Glafs will contradict all you can urge.

Lady Abs. And flatter me like you.

Enter Lady Harriet.

Har. Well, I have been so teiz'd with Mrs. Ruth.— Had I ever known what the Vapours or Spleen are, she'd have overwhelm'd me with 'em. May I dye, if she has not been praising the clear Air of *Moorfields*, the pleasant Walks of *Hogsdon*, the retir'd Situation of *Islington*, and the polite Inhabitants of *Hackney*, *Clapton* and *Humer-ton*; and that the gentile Part of the World live in *Coleman Street*, *Billiter Square*, *Mark Lane*, *Mincing Lane*, *Crouched Fryars*, *Tower Hill* and *Thames Street*. Then their Manners, Dress and Equipage are much superiour to what she sees here.— So decent, so regular, so wise and discreet in their Conversation and Behaviour.— She can't endure the Thoughts of the *Mall*, *Hyde-Park*, *St. James's*, the *Bath*, *Tunbridge* and *Epsom*. Well, she's a provoking

provoking Piece of stiff Formality, Ignorance and Impertinence. I can't bear her ; — hideous Creature !

Lady Abs. Prepossession in Education is as strong as that in Religion, and as seldom departed from. Custom blinds our Reason, and encourages Obstinacy.

Sir Fran. Nothing can subsist out of its Element. How does a compleat Beau appear at the *Change*, a Broker at an *Assembly*, an Alderman in the Presence Chamber, a Courtier at a City Ball, a Coquet of Quality at a Publick Dancing at *Guild Hall*, a Merchant's Wife on a Birth Night at *St. James's*, an Orange Woman at a Conventicle, and a Puritan at a Play-House ? They are black Swans, and every Body stares at 'em : But Beauty's ador'd every where ; you raise Admiration in all Places when you appear.

Lady Abs. You forget your self, *Sir Francis*.

Sir Fran. Pardon me, Madam, — you know the Reason.

Har. This Way of addressing is as bad as *your Eyes are bright as twinkling Stars, your ruby Lips and snowy Breasts*. — I beg, when you address me, let it be in a *nouvelle* Manner. — I can't tell how, but methinks you Men of Wit should endeavour to be full of Variety, and let the Inspiration you so much brag of, be found in every Sentence, Gesture, Look and Air. I have had a hunder'd Lovers begin with an obsequious Bow, so on to Adoration, your amazing Charms, and end with Pangs, Tortures, Sighs, and killing Darts ; and this they call making Love. — I would not keep a Waiting Woman that had not a better Taste than to suffer such Nonsense. — Fie, fie, *Sir Francis*, a Man of Quality should be asham'd

asham'd of what's said over Cakes and Ale, every *Easter* and *Whitsontide*, by the Vulgar to their *Cloe's*.

Sir Fran. How does your Ladyship like the pertness of the *French*?

Har. Impudent.

Sir Fran. The *Spanish* Manner?

Har. Insolently proud.

Sir Fran. The *Italian*?

Har. Deceitful.

Sir Fran. The *Dutch*?

Har. Meer Swine.

Sir Fran. But a *Dorimant* must win you?

Har. A Villain.

Sir Fran. Sir *Courtly*?

Har. A Fool.

Sir Fran. Lord *Morelove*?

Har. An Ass, that can't speak for himself.

Sir Fran. Sir *Harry Wildair*?

Har. Too full of himself to be any Body's else.

Sir Fran. Lord *Foppington*?

Har. A Coxcomb, that has Vanity enough to believe the whole Sex doats on him, and thinks he has a Seraglio, and that he can command as many Women as the *Grand Signior*.

Sir Fran. A Plain-Dealer?

Har. A Brute.

Sir Fran. Then a *Horner's* the Man?

Har. Out upon the nasty Fellow.

Sir Fran. At this rate your Ladiship is not to be pleas'd.

Har. I am a little Curious.

Lady Abs. She has but an indifferent Opinion of what you call Love.

Sir Fran. Gadso! Now I have hit upon it. What think you of a Thousand a Year Joynture?

Lady Abs.

Lady Abf. Oh! that has some Charms.

Har. But not enough, without the Man's very agreeable, and will settle himself on me for Life, and suffer no Encroachments to be made on his Person, but generously keeps the Covenant made at the Altar, as strictly as that he's bound under Hand and Seal to perform by Law.

Sir Fran. You must run the hazard of that.

Har. You'l permit me to make use of my Judgment when I chuse.

Sir Fran. That may betray you.

Har. According to the Sentiments you have of your self.

Sir Fran. Oh, that's doubting your own Power.

Har. No, it's mistrusting your Faith.

Lady Abf. And that I dare swear is very rotten and decay'd.

Sir Fran. Your Ladiship's too Censorious.

Lady Abf. Who can help believing a receiv'd Opinion? Pray, did you never make Love to a marry'd Woman? Certainly, that must be a different sort of Courtship, full of Art and dark Designs.

Sir Fran. For Heaven's sake, you don't design to expose me!

Lady Abf. No, no, only put the Question to my Lady Harriet, and take her Opinion by way of stating the Case. *A* solicites *B*; *Quare*, Is it honourable in *A*, and so on.

Har. How! It's something so indecent, I protest, it never enter'd into my Thoughts.

Lady Abf. Nay, it would surprise me.

Har. I can't think so ill of Sir Francis neither — But the Wretch that can be guilty of that, must think the Person he attacks to be an errant Fool, or something so gross it's not fit to be nam'd.

Lady Abf.

Lady Abs. He can want no Assurance. What think you, *Sir Francis*?

Sir Fran. Foregad, I, I, I ———

Har. A Criminal might as well request a Judge to suffer for him, when he has condemn'd him, as an impudent Fellow to ask a Wife to give up her Honour.

Lady Abs. None sure would dare to attempt it, without great Encouragement.

Har. That's certain.

Lady Abs. By too much freedom in Words or indecent Behaviour.

Har. The Man must be as impudent as the Devil.

Lady Abs. I wonder how such vile Things get into their Heads.

Har. They are pretty Creatures truly, and take an accidental Smile, or a little Gaity, for Articles of Surrender.

Lady Abs. And have the Vanity to think a Woman's prepar'd to lay down her Arms and receive the Conqueror, because she has suffer'd an innocent Parley.

Har. Nay, and if she does not gratify his Expectations, he sacrifices her Honour, by way of Revenge, and confidently swears he has obtain'd those Favours her Modesty would not permit her to bestow upon him.

Sir Fran. Why, Ladies, this is not fair. Permit me to make my Defence. You charge so furiously, there's no keeping my Ground.

Lady Abs. You had as good plead Guilty for your self in particular.

Har. That won't be sufficient : Such Crimes are too heinous to receive Grace or Pardon.

Sir Fran.

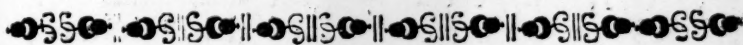
Sir Fran. This is down-right Persecution, which obliges me to fly your Power, till the Storm's over. Ladies, your Servant. *[Exit.]*

Lady Abs. and *Har.* Sir Francis, Sir Francis.

Lady Abs. Let's pursue him now we are so near running him down.

Har. With all my Heart; but he'll be like the Fox, good for nothing when we have caught him.

[Exeunt.]



A C T III.

S C E N E *continues.*

Enter Lady Absent and Forward.

Form. **A**N please your Ladiship, it surpriz'd me; and as I was telling your Ladiship, his Confidence made my very Hair stand an End, and I wonder how he could dare to offer such an Affront. I protest, and as I hope to be sav'd, he made a meer Jest of her. I pity the poor easy Gentlewoman; but your Ladiship knows, what's done can't be undone.

Lady Abs. Do you take no further Notice of it, leave the Resentment to me,

Form. Adso, why your Ladiship cannot resent the Injury too much.

Lady Abs. I know what's proper.

Form. I hope, Madam, you won't tamely put it up.

Lady Abs. That's not your Concern.

E

Form. Not

Form. Not mine! 'Tis every Body's. Poor injur'd Gentlewoman!

Lady Abs. Don't be impertinent; I know best when to take Notice of it.

Form. I can't forbear speaking my Mind. Your Ladiship bears it too tamely.

Lady Abs. How dare you pretend to judge what's fitting to be done?

Form. Nay, I beg your Ladiship's Pardon, 'twas my respect to the Family—or they might have—ay truly might they—till Doomday for me. It's no Concern of mine! I wish it was; I'd make him pay severely for't. Ay marry would I—but I thought it my Duty to inform your Ladiship——You may do what you will.

Lady Abs. Be gone, I tell you; no more, and hold your Tongue. [Exit Lady.]

Form. Is this all I'm like to have for my Pains——I'gad, I know something more than her Ladiship thinks I do. But no matter, there may be a Time to acquaint his Lordship of her Freedoms with some Body, and, good Madam, the Presents some Body has made you. Am I so inconsiderable as to be despis'd——But I'd have her to know—— [Exit.]

Enter Mrs. Ruth and Sir Francis.

Sir Fran. Out upon it, you can't be so very silly, and bred in the City.——You know well enough they never keep their Words, and that's the only gentile Quality they have, but are guided by Interest: Profit's their Idol, and Credit a staulking Horse, which they sell or barter when they can get by it. They set up, and then break for Profit; give Notes, and never pay 'em for Profit;

Profit ; dissemble, cant, seem religious, deceive, and all for Profit's sake.

Ruth. O fie, *Sir Francis*, I did not believe you could have been so wicked.——What a Sin have you made me commit ?

Sir Fran. I have made a Woman of you, Child.

Ruth. A miserable one.

Sir Fran. It will be your own Fault then.

Ruth. You have gone too far for my Reputation.

Sir Fran. It's in your Power to set all right.

Ruth. No, no, it's in yours.

Sir Fran. That any Man for a Husband will do,

Ruth. You have robb'd me of my Purity.

Sir Fran. But then I have given you Knowledge in lieu of it.

Ruth. That Knowledge is wicked Knowledge, and what availeth the Knowledge of Wickedness ?

‘ *Sir Fran.* Can't you, like the rest of the Saints, wipe your Mouth, and look as Innocent as if you had not tasted the forbidden Fruit ?

‘ *Ruth.* The Sting remaineth in my Conscience, and the Wound is deep.’

Sir Fran. Let me advise you.

Ruth. As much as you please ; I am ready to take any Advice from you, so it be but wholesome Advice.

Sir Fran. Why, marry the old rich Scrivener that solicites your Uncle for you.

Ruth. Fie upon you, he's not a Man for me.

Sir Fran. He'll keep you a Coach, and suffer you to do what you will.

Ruth. What signifies a Coach, and all the superfluities of Life, if one has not him the Heart earneth after.

Sir Fran. Why then take the Wholesale Grocer, the Country Gentleman; you have enough to chuse out of.

Ruth. I can't bear the Thoughts of 'em—— barbarous,—— why did you not tell me this beforehand?

Sir Fran. Faith, I did not think of it.—— You must not cry, 'tis Childish.

Enter Lady Absent and Harriet.

Lady Abs. Her Tears confirm what my Woman told me.—— What's the Matter, Niece?

Har. Have you been teizing her, *Sir Francis*?

Sir Fran. She has only lost her Lap-Dog.

Lady Abs. Her Lap-Dog indeed. (*aside.*) So you have been comforting her. A very charitable Office truly.

Enter Forward.

Form. Mr. *Lovell* desires leave to pay his Respects to Lady *Harriet*.

Har. Ay, let him come in; he's like a Brocade Suit, not to be wore out: Well, an obstinate Lover, and a Court Solicitor, are troublesome Things; they'll take no Denial.

Lady Abs. He's an agreeable Gentleman; for as you, *Sir Francis*, rail at and expose every Body's Faults, he praises their Virtues, and never speaks ill of any Body.

Sir Fran. That's a sort of Bribery, to gain a general Esteem, or a mistrust of his own want of Wit, and therefore won't venture to provoke another's, for fear of being severely handled.

Har. I

Har. I wish we could perswade you to exercise your Talent upon your own Vices.

Lady Abs. He's too fond of 'em to expose 'em.

Sir Fran. Ladies, I hope you think 'em so few, they are not worth taking Notice of.

Lady Abs. You deserve as severe a Censure as most People, or I'm mistaken.

Sir Fran. Your Ladiship has too ill an Opinion of me.

Lady Abs. Is it worse than you deserve?

Sir Fran. You wrong me.

Har. I can hardly believe that ; for most Men are the same, and plead the general Issue for an Excuse——The Fashion.

Lady Abs. Then you take Fashion to be like Custom at Common Law, the one gives a Sanction, because every Body approves and wears it ; and the other, tho' it be ever so ridiculous, Time out of Mind, supports and makes it just.

Enter Mr. Lovell.

Lov. Ladies, your Servant.

Sir Fran. Mr. Lovell, your most obedient humble Servant.

Lov. Sir Francis, I am yours.—[*To Lady Har.*] You see your attracting Power, how with Humility I thus approach the Shrine of Beauty, even Gravity and Age are cheer'd when you shine forth, and all with Adoration bow, and own the Power they feel to be divine.

Har. So, so, very fine ; you Gentlemen are like the Lawyers, and address, as they plead, by Precedent, and keep a Common-Place Book, which you get by Heart ; and are at a full Stop when you have run through it. Raptures, Blifs, Poetick Rage,

Rage, fierce Desires, Charms, and Angels ; the God of Love, the Sea-born Goddess, the Graces, Nymphs and Shepherds, Fables that Children learn at School, and are like old Stories told in a Chimney Corner, not worth remembering.

Lady Abs. You must, I am sure, put a Constraint upon your self, when you seem thus Indifferent. *Sir Francis* is a fine Gentleman, and has let you know what a wonderful Esteem he has for you ; and I think *Mr. Lovell* has given a sufficient Proof of his Passion, by a continual Application. 'Tis but saying which you like best, the Ceremony will be soon over ; then we'll dance till Midnight, to Bed, throw the Stocking, be merry over the Sack-Posslet, draw the Curtain, and so, good Night.

Har. Hold, hold, you are too hasty ; it requires a little more Consideration than to jump into an unknown State so suddenly.

Ruth. Her Ladiship may be too free in her Offers, before she's thoroughly satisfied all Parties are consenting.

Har. Pray which of 'em is it you are afraid of losing ?

Ruth. I should have but a very mean Opinion of my self to be frighted upon your Account.

Har. Some People have a great deal of Vanity.

Ruth. What do you think of your self ?

Har. So well, that it is not in your Power to give me any Uneasiness with that Air.

Ruth. You may be mistaken in this Air.

Lady Abs. You are too Pert with *Lady Harriet*.

Ruth. Why is she so free with me, then ?

Lov. You can't be so Hard-hearted as not to have tender Sentiments for some Body.

Har. Pray what are they ?

Sir Fran.

Sir Fran. Do you never intend to marry ?

Har. Why—— that's an ensnaring Question.

Lov. You must shew your Intentions some Time or other, by an agreeable Silence, which is one Way ; a consenting Smile, a cast down Look, or saying Yes, with a modest Blush.

Har. Phoo, phoo, I never design to do any Thing that will occasion a Blush : I'll go to Church in a Frolick, be marry'd in a Frolick, (if ever) and then let what will happen after the Frolick.

Sir Fran. I beseech your Ladiship, take me with you.

Har. Oh then I should blush indeed.

Lov. Let me wait on you to Prayers, 'tis but having a short Dialogue with the Parson, for a Quarter of an Hour, and you'll oblige me forever.

Har. I should say, No ; disappoint you, and rob the Priest of his Fees. I've consider'd the Articles of Agreement, and don't very well like 'em. Let me see : For Better for Worse, —— that's buying a Pig in a Poke. —— For Richer for Poorer —— meer Lottery, and Ten to One but I draw a blank. —— ' In Sicknefs and in Health —— that may prove no better than Nurse-keeping. —— To Love and to Cherish, till Death us do part ; that may be to love the Gout, and cherish Ill-nature, and be continually provok'd to wish him in Heaven, so I were but rid of him ; and never cease praying to be deliver'd from what's worse than the Plague, Pestilence and Famine, a bad Husband. '

Ruth. You shall have a Husband made on purpose.

Har.

Har Why, so I will, if I don't lead Apes with you, on purpose; for as they say, Marriage was first made in Heaven o'purpose, tho' it's often broke upon Earth o'purpose.

Lady Abs. That she won't, I'll be sworn; *Sir Francis* has put it out of her Power. [*Aside.*]

Sir Fran. I'll turn my self into any Shape to please you.

Lady Abs. Or any Body else. [*Aside.*]

Har. And out, to displease me, if I were but once in your Power. I hate a *Proteus*.

Lov. I would endeavour to please without wearing a Mask, or attempting to deceive you.

Har. I can't very well tell my own Mind. But when I do think of a Man, it must be one of an open generous Temper, mix'd with good Manners and Integrity.

Lov. I dare not say I am he.

Har. If any Thing could perswade me to believe so, it is your Modesty.

Sir Fran. Then the Dispute's over. I have the Right to claim your Esteem.

Har. One wou'd believe you never look'd in a Glass, you know so little of your own Face. Ha, ha, Modesty,

Lady Abs. He's a very modest Gentleman truly. Ha, ha.

Sir Fran. O dear Ladies, your Freedoms with me I take as Favours,

Har. Oh, I have more such Favours at your Service. He must have so much Honour as to think an Intrigue, Mean and Scandalous; and to attempt another Man's Wife, Villainous.

Lady Abs. Do you hear that, *Sir Francis*?

Sir Fran. So, very well. Here's fine Doctrine!

[*Aside.*]

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Har. And, by his Example, and kind Perswasion, cure any little Folly he might perceive me guilty of: ' Always easy in my Company; best pleas'd at Home; be chearful, and smile upon his whole Family, to shew no Broil or Discontent inhabits within his Doors. Such a Husband would be more endearing after Marriage, than it was possible for him to appear engaging before, when they put on their best Looks to persuade.'

Sir Fran. You have describ'd me to a Tittle.

Har. And left none of your Virtues untouch'd.

Lady Abf. She has chalkt you out, but it wants true Colouring to make a perfect Likeness.

Sir Fran. The best Painters never take a Face in the worst Light.

Lady Abf. Then, if I might advise, I'd never have you set for your Picture; it will be a hard Matter to put you in an agreeable One.

Sir Fran. I am oblig'd to your Ladyship: 'Tis artfully done to rally me; 'tis the only way to prevent Suspicion.

Lady Abf. I'm glad you think so. — Mr. Lovell, my Lord's alone, shan't we go to him? He'll think we neglect him, to keep so much good Company from him.

Lov. With all my Heart.

Sir Fran. By all means.

Har. It's rude to leave him to chew the Cud of Repentance, past Follies, Death and Futurity.

Ruth. They best become the Minds of the Upright.

Har. I dare lay my Life they never reach'd your Heart; you think of something else.

Ruth. I am no Hypocrite.

Har. Pho, then you're no Woman. [Exeunt.

F

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[*Aside.*]

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F

Enter

Enter Lord Absent, Mrs. Forward following.

Lord Abs. This Woman wants to tell me something I would be inform'd of—— But 'tis mean to listen to Inferiors; they often, for base Ends, represent Things in a false Light. — I shall be able to trace it my self. 'Tis very well, no Matter; go about your Business.

Forw. There may come a Time you'll want to be let into the Secret; then it will be sweet Mrs. Forward, good Mrs. Forward, and how, and when, and where; but the Devil take me if I tell you one Tittle [*Aside.*] [*Exit.*]

Lord Abs. This did I find [*Pulling a Letter, and Picture wrapt up in it, out of his Pocket.*] upon her Toylet; left there by careless Accident, I suppose, folded in this Letter, which talks of Passion, Love, and hot Desire. A pretty Present for a married Woman to receive from her Husband's Friend.—— His Picture set in Diamonds.—— Well, Sir Francis must be a Villain. I think they have been too free even before my Face.—— She may be Innocent—— But then, why did she receive this Letter, and this Picture? It might be left upon her Toylet by him, without her Privy.—— He has the Freedom of my House, as if it was his own.—— He knew I did not doubt my Wife; that I seldom come near her Dressing Room, and that I am not of a curious, prying Temper.—— But then it's unnatural to think he should be so bold in his first Approach: She must have given him Encouragement—— I know him Vain,—— my Wife a Woman of Freedom. He may have misinterpreted her Words and Actions, which had no other mean-

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meaning than good Manners, and a free Reception, to one I made Familiar in my Family. A little Patience:— I would not be so mean as to let her know I doubt without a Cause. Nothing is so contemptible as Jealousy: You can't wrong a Virtuous Woman more; and to break with him too suddenly, will be flatly accusing her.

Enter Lady Absent.

Lady Abs. I see he has the Bait. The Medicine operates, and the Convulsions will shew themselves in Starts and Catches, though the Mind be fortify'd with Reason's strongest Bars. [*Lord*

Absent puts up the Letter and Picture.]

My dear, we want your Company; Mr. Lovell's within too, and desires to see you.

Lord Abs. I'll wait on him.

Lady Abs. Come then, go along with me.

Lord Abs. Ay.

Lady Abs. They'll all be impatient.

Lord Abs. Presently— My Dear, I would not have you think I am uneasy or disturb'd at your Conduct; but the World is Cenforious, and takes all Opportunities to magnify every little Freedom. Too many are ready to find Fault, and turn indifferent Things to their own evil Wishes, and, as they would have 'em, make 'em.

Lady Abs. What's all this to me?

Lord Abs. I speak not with Suspicion, only I think 'twould be better if you were a little more reserv'd.

Lady Abs. I don't understand you.

Lord Abs. It's not enough to justify our Conduct to our selves, it ought to be regulated by the

World's Eye, to act so as not to leave room for Malice or Detraction, to take Advantage.—— A Reserv'dness, with a cool Behaviour, prevents a great many idle Circumstances, which, put together, may amount to something or another, that will look like want of Discretion, and fully a Character that might be kept entire with a little Caution.

Lady Abs. Too much Reserv'dness and Caution is the Hypocrite's Disguise, which they put on to gloss those Follies, they would blush to be guilty of Bare-fac'd.

Lord Abs. There's Difference between a due Care, and an affected Cunning.

Lady Abs. Not as you seem to dress 'em.

Lord Abs. An open Freedom in a Woman, is often taken for an Invitation to a more close Familiarity, which draws her in to be affronted; or surpris'd into those Indecencies she never thought to commit.

Lady Abs. The Vulgar, thro' Ignorance or Envy, sometimes presume too far, but People of Distinction have more Manners than to censure so freely.

Lord Abs. You judge carelessly, and don't weigh the designing Part of the Men of Fashion.

Lady Abs. I never had any Occasion.

Lord Abs. No?

Lady Abs. Heyday! Why do you hint so silly a Question, as if I had? What do you mean?

Lord Abs. Why—— Nothing.

Lady Abs. Then Nothing signifies Nothing—— There's Sir Francis, who would think amiss of him? He's a most accomplish'd Gentleman; so gay in his Address, he delights every Body with his Conversation, when he has a Mind to be entertaining.

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Lord Abs. She's concern'd, and speaks of him with Warmth. [*Aside.*] Does he not take too great a Liberty?

Lady Abs. O it's all without Design.

Lord Abs. Are you satisfy'd it is?

Lady Abs. Only Gallantry, Mirth, and good Humour. What should it be else?

Lord Abs. It may be so.

Lady Abs. You have no Cause to believe to the contrary, I hope.

Lord Abs. I think not.

Lady Abs. Then there can be no Harm in it. But I must confess he pleases me better than any of your Acquaintance.

Lord Abs. Suppose he knew that.

Lady Abs. What if he did?

Lord Abs. Why it might——

Lady Abs. What? For I never made a Secret of it.

Lord Abs. Occasion him to presume too much upon such Encouragement, and the World to let fall idle Expressions.

Lady Abs. Is he not your Friend? And Friendship is Sacred. I know you to have too much Understanding to have contracted an Intimacy with him, introduc'd him so frankly into your Family, if you had been satisfy'd he was not worth valuing. I always ground my Opinion from your Example; and what you countenance and recommend, I receive implicitly.

Lord Abs. Suppose I have chang'd my Sentiments of him?

Lady Abs.

Lady Abs. When I am satisfy'd you have, I shall alter mine.

Lord Abs. I wish you would.

Lady Abs. You an't Jealous sure.

Lord Abs. This curs'd Infection has seisd me, and, if I don't take Care, I shall discover it too soon. [*aside.*] You may carry your self a little more reserv'd.

Lady Abs. For what Reason?

Lord Abs. Only my Fancy.

Lady Abs. In the Name of Wonder, what has posses'd you? But be it as it will, if you command, I shall obey.

Lord Abs. It is not worth while to urge it so far; I have a better Opinion of your Conduct.

Lady Abs. Or you can have made no Observati-on of my Behaviour.

Lord Abs. Well, well, there's no Occasion for any more Words on this Subject.

Lady Abs. I think not indeed. Mr. Lovell, and the rest of the Company, expect us.

Lord Abs. I go with you. [*Exeunt.*]

Enter Harriet, and Forward meeting.

Form. I am glad I have met with your Ladiship alone; I have Secrets to tell your Ladiship, worth your Ladiship's hearing, I can assure you.

Har. Secrets! Prithee keep them to thy self; they are troublesome Things.

Form. Your Ladiship would not be so careless, if you knew how much they concern you.

Har. For that very Reason I don't desire to know 'em, they may make me uneasy.

Form. But, Madam, I can't rest without telling you; I have such a profound Respect for your Ladiship.

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Har. Nor I mayn't I rest if you do tell me?

Forw. Sir *Francis* is the falsest Creature.

Har. Prithee, what's that to me?

Forw. Mrs. *Ruth* and he——

Har. With all my Heart.

Forw. Nay, and my Lady too——

Har. How, what rail at your Lady! Have a Care, Mrs. *Forward*, or I shall let her know that Secret. [Exit.]

Forw. Very pretty truly. See what 'tis to be Honest. I am resolv'd not to be out of the Cause: If I can't be of this Side, I'll be o't'other. Sir *Francis*, no doubt, will be glad to give me a retaining Fee. [Exit.]

A C T IV.

S C E N E *continues.*

Enter Lady Absent and Lady Harriet.

Lady Abs. ALL this Indifference is put on only to support dear Pride and delightful Vanity. I had the very same Distemper, when under your Circumstances: I abhorr'd the Creature that thought I lik'd him, but didn't Care how many lik'd me. I would not, for the World, have been suspected to be in Love with a Man, Things that I made Fools of Publickly every Day, Abominable! But for all that, when I came to put the Question seriously, I found I could not deceive my self. I know it's just so with you, Child, if you'd confess the Truth.

Har. Do

Har. Do you really think so?

Lady Abs. Upon my Word I do. Prithee which of your two Lovers do you like best?

Har. Let me know which you like best.

Lady Abs. You would not have me chuse for you?

Har. I am so indifferent, you may if you please.

Lady Abs. Why then, what think you of Sir Francis?

Har. O extreamly well for an humble Servant; he always appears Engaging, Free, and Complaissant.

Lady Abs. And is every Body's most obsequiously.

Har. So he is mine, while he's with me, I'm content; for 'tis something so very shocking to stand for a Cypher, whilst another of less Merit, perhaps, by being particularly address'd makes a better Figure. He's Grand Abroad, has a Title, knows every Body of Distinction, is receiv'd at Court, commands Respect with a graceful Assurance, introduces you to the Drawing-Room, at a Ball, or an *Assemblee*, with Authority, among the best of Quality, and these are Things that glitter so brightly in a Woman's Eye, they hardly give her leave to ask how she likes his Person, till he puts the ultimate Question, and then she must have a great deal of Conduct, Resolution, and Understanding, not to be run away with.

Lady Abs. I never doubted your Conduct, Understanding, or Resolution.

Har. O you should not flatter your Friend.— Sir Francis is gay and engaging.

Lady Abs. Mr. Lovell's constant and genteel.

Har. Then he has Wit and Satyr.

Lady Abs. Understanding and good Nature is preferable.

Har.

Har. Ay, but he's judiciously severe on every Body.

Lady Abs. The other speaks well of every Body.

Har. With what Spirit he addresses.

Lady Abs. Compare that with Modesty and good Manners.

Har. The one dresses fashionable and fine.

Lady Abs. I like grave and decent better.

Har. The Coach and Six, and a multitude of Servants.

Lady Abs. Mr. *Lovell* preserves his Estate, and lives up to his Quality without fluttering to be star'd at, or dunn'd for his Folly.

Har. He's receiv'd at Court by all the Grantees.

Lady Abs. 'Tis better to be valu'd by a few Men of Sense, and be always sincerely welcom to them, than converse with every Body, and be truly respected by none. Mr. *Lovell's* the Man for my Money, ; in him you'll find Sincerity, Truth and lasting Affection.

Har. Pho, I never seriously thought of either, nor can I tell which is preferable, a forceable Flash of Love, Falshood finely cover'd, and lasting Dissimulation complaisantly carry'd on, or stiff Sincerity, old fashion'd Truth, and buff Affection.

Lady Abs. Now defend your self if you can. I see Mr. *Lovell* coming this way, Sir *Francis* can't be far off: He's too cunning to permit him to gain an Advantage by a private Interview.

Har. Liberty, Quiet, and an uncontroll'd Freedom, will prevail against all their Perswasions, urg'd to gratify their own Inclinations.

Lady Abs. You can't tell your own Mind.

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Har:

Har. That's hard, indeed.

Lady Abs. You'll find it so.

[Exit.]

Enter Mr. Lovell and Sir Francis.

Sir Fran. *Where e'er you fly, 'tis pleasure to pursue ;
'Tis vast Delight to have you but in View.*

Har. Very fine, indeed, *Sir Francis.*

Lov. *I only humbly beg, and ask no more,
Than leave to gaze, and that bright Form adore.*

Har. With all my Heart ; and 'tis pity you should e'er have more than you ask for. Pray let me throw in my *Extempore* Couplet, that I mayn't be beholden to you for your Complements :

*So sighing Swains to Mopsa make their Moans,
And their Love-Stories tell in dismal Tones.*

Ha, ha, ha. But now I think on't, you may have Business, you approach in such Form and Order, therefore a grave Air will best become me.

Sir Fran. Oh, of extraordinary Concern.

Lov. Mine is no less than Life and Happiness.

Har. Pray inform me, I shan't keep you long in suspense.

Sir Fran. 'Tis you are Mistress of my Fate ; my Happiness consists in you, and would you but smile——

Har. Is that all ? Soon done, with little Trouble, and at your Service.

Lov. You have possession of a Heart of mine.

Har. That's more than I know ; but if you carelessly left it, I never saw it, and you may take it again where you find it ; I have no occasion for it.

Lov. Would you turn a faithful Servant out of Doors ?

Har. Certainly, when I don't want him ; and his over-acted Diligence becomes troublesome.

Sir Fran.

Sir Fran. I wish I could perswade you to receive me upon liking.

Har. And by that means give you an Opportunity to discover my little *Foibles*; then, cunningly insinuate your self into my Favour, and, from an humble Slave, become a domineering Tyrant.

Sir Fran. Impossible; you have Power to awe Presumption with a Frown.

Har. I shan't run the Hazard.

Lov. In me you'll have no Cause to fear the Tyrant.

Har. He lurks in every Man. Besides, I'm not in haste to change the open Air for Confinement, quit publick Diversion for private Snarling; being plagu'd with a rude Husband instead of half a Dozen obedient humble Servants; Dress in your Fancy, not my own; grow negligent, because I don't like my Cloaths; not Smile without Leave; my Thoughts censur'd, my Behaviour limited, my Servants appointed for me, my Diet suited to your Palate, my Nights disturb'd with late Hours, or a separate Bed. ' with a Mistress; and a continu'd Course of Fear, Restraint, Disappointment, and inward Repentance, for being such a Fool to part with my Hand to one who has not good Nature enough to complement me with his Heart;' when I have given him Possession of my Person and Fortune, to convince him I was so Silly as to believe all the fine Stories he told me.

Sir Fran. This is supposing Impossibleities, on my side: Your Perfections will always refresh Love and Esteem; you shall but wish, and all shall be prepar'd to gratify that Wish, before you can think it possible. You shall have a Settlement from the Day of Marriage at your own Dis-

posal, not a Joynture: Separate Servants, your own Coach; I'll watch each Minute to oblige; continual Delight shall keep you Company; all shall be Heaven and Ease, while I employ my Hours to please the Goddesses of my Soul.

Lov. Would I could perswade, you should not have an opportunity to Envy, or wish to change Conditions with the greatest: 'Twould be the only Happiness I ask, to see you surrounded with Content, and always smiling at the attending Joys that wait your Will.

Har. The soft Pipe decoys the harmless Quail, the glittering Glass the Lark, and gilded Promises, you think, a Springe to catch us weak unthinking Women in: You point well, but the Bird's too shy to be taken; the Net's seen, and I like Liberty too well to run into the Snare. I'm not in haste to fall under the Sportman's Gripe, who values the Pastime more than the Game, when 'tis caught. Fie, fie, a single Partridge is not worth spreading your Net for. Whole Coveys are your Diversion. What, would you turn Poachers, and spare nothing that falls in your Way?

Lov. I never knew what 'twas to change, nor ever lov'd before.

Har. You may taint the sooner.

Lov. 'Tis a Vice I have no Taste for.

Har. Then abstaining is no Virtue in you, but Temptation will make it relish.

Sir Fran. Before Gad, I'm weary of it.

Har. As a Child of a Fair, or a Fop of Toy-shop.

Sir Fran. Upon my Soul, if I know my own Mind——

Har. That you do perfectly well.

Sir Fran. I must frankly own——

Har. That

Har. That it is not in the Power of any human Creature to make a Convert of you.

Sir Fran. Fie, Madam, I beg you would not condemn without a fair Tryal.

Har. You are an *Outlaw*, and ought to have Sentence put in Execution for your Contempt.

Lov. Those always stand fair in the Eye of Justice, that have preserv'd a good Reputation.

Har. No Judge is oblig'd to give Reasons for his Opinion.

Lov. You are too just to find me Guilty without so much as a circumstantial Proof.

Har. It must be so, and it shall be so.

Lov. Submission's best where there lies no Appeal. You are, I must confess, my *Dernier Resort*.

Enter Mrs. Ruth.

Har. I'm very glad you're come to my Relief, *Mrs. Ruth*, *Sir Francis* and *Mr. Lovell* have made such violent Assaults, I was afraid I should have been compell'd to surrender. Nothing but the Difficulty of knowing which to prefer prevented it.

Ruth. You may mistake *Sir Francis's* good Manners for what he never meant.

Har. He has said so many fine Things——

Sir Fran. And you can't but believe the reality of 'em.

Har. I must provoke her to expose her self; I find she likes him, and he has been tampering with her. [*Aside.*] No doubt, he would be glad he had Reason to boast of any Encouragement I have given him.

Ruth. Sir

Ruth. Sir *Francis* has a better Understanding than to be taken with a flirt of a Fan. a Fleece, an Ogle, or any indecent Tricks of Wantonness.

Har. Do you suppose, that prim Look, puritanic Sighs, cast up Eyes, and formal Grace of yours, have made a Conquest of so fine a Gentleman's Heart? Ha, ha.

Ruth. Perhaps I may have more Interest in him, if I please, than you desire I should.

Lov. I beg your Ladiship would resign your Interest, if you have any in him.

Sir Fran. Tho' Mrs. *Ruth* may ha' taken Pet against your Ladiship, I beg I mayn't be injur'd in your Esteem by her private Pique.

Har. I don't envy her, I do assure you.

Ruth. If you did, it would be to little purpose, may be.

Lov. Sir *Francis* may have given her just Cause to enter her Claim.

Har. The Child's afraid of losing its Man.

Ruth. Not by any Power you have over him.

Sir Fran. You won't expose your self. [*Aside to Ruth.*]

Ruth. I can't bear her Insolence. [*to Sir Fran.*]

Sir Fran. But you'll preserve your own Reputation. [*to Ruth.*]

Ruth. That can't suffer, if you're an upright Man. [*to Sir Fran.*]

Har. I hope you have reconcil'd Matters.

Lov. She seems in better Temper.

Har. A kind Word or two has calm'd her Rage. Fie, fie, Sir *Francis*, it would be ungrateful not to make a suitable Return to so tender a Passion.— Nay, when she has been so very obliging to spare no Pains to let you know how violent it is.

Ruth. Nor

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Ruth. Nor you have spar'd no Pains to let him know, how glad you'd be to have him like you.

Har. Ha, ha, you'll make an agreeable Couple.

Sir Fran. Before Gad, you're too hard upon Mrs. *Ruth*, and force her to say more than ever she thought on, out of pure Contradiction.

Har. I perceive you don't always address in vain.

Ruth. Not when he applies to you.

Har. Indeed he has, to no purpose.

Ruth. I can't apprehend that.

Har. What, because he has broke his Way into your upright Heart, you think there's no withstanding him.

Ruth. Your vain Opinion's insignificant.

Har. Yo won't deny the Truth.

Ruth. You know not what Truth is, therefore despise the Professors of it.

Har. You must reform your humble Servant, before he'll be fit to be receiv'd into the City with you, among the sober Party, and perswade him to travel with you thro' *St. John's street*, then to the Brick-kilns, and so on to *Highgate*, to visit a rich Jew; leave the freedom of Life to cant for a counterfeit Reputation; go to Market for his Family; frequent dirty Coffee-Houses, instead of *White's* or *St. James's*; put on a wry Face to please others, and wear a borrow'd Countenance to appear like the rest of the Herd: Go to a precise Club at Seven in the Evening, where they censure the Proceedings of their Betters, and consult about News, Trade, Politicks and Credit.

Sir Fran. Heyday! you won't make a Monster of me, and then shew me to the World?

Ruth. You like galloping abroad in a gaudy painted Chariot, with Creatures in Fool's Coats to hang

hang about it, and shew your outward Ornaments, while the most precious Part, the Mind, is neglected and uncloath'd. The Smoak of the Brick-kilns is better than the sinful Dust of *Piccadilly*. You may despise the *Jews*, but I think they are to be prefer'd before Reprobates, that have no Sense of Shame; who continually lie basking in Frailty; the Chocolate Houses stink of perfum'd Vices, and are full of ungodly Looking-Glasses, that magnify vain Ornaments, and delude, with Idolatry, those that look into them, and occasion Self-Adoration.—I'd have you to know, they wear stedfast Countenances in the City, and are adorn'd with inward Truth, which shineth outwardly; and converse with Sobriety, early Hours, Gravity and Judgment; and do not go to Plays, Masquerades, and Musick-Meetings, Places of Sin and Darknefs.

Sir Fran. Why, what a Condition am I in, between keen Satyr and mortifying Cant!

Har. It must be a pleasing Sight to see *Sir Francis* and his Lady ride in Triumph amongst the shining sleek Beavers, the Holy-Day Suits, formal Congees, middle ag'd Plumbs, sparkish Merchants, wealthy Tradesmen, rich Usurers, smart Attorneys, that keep their Coaches, Heirs to the Gown and Chain, overgrown wholesale Dealers, and warm Drapers.

Sir Fran. 'Sdeath, your Ladiship will make me mad. Here's a Description indeed.—You can't suppose——

Ruth. You may despise the Citizens, but they know how to thrive and get Money, as well as the People at this End of the Town know how to throw it away. But when you want wherewith to supply your Follies, you are glad to cringe to
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'em with your Jewels, Plate and Estates to Pawn, discharge Honourable Debts, as you call 'em, or supply your extravagant Play, and exorbitant Pride. They don't hide their Talent, but improve it.

Lov. And leave it to be return'd after their Deaths, by their Heirs, to the right Owners, who set up for Men of Fashion, and become Bubbles to those their Fathers or Relations had extorted Mortgages, Bills of Sale, and clandestine Judgments from, for as much more as they lent 'em.

Har. A pious Way of thriving truly.

Ruth. Much better than a luxurious Ruin. I'm resolv'd not to stay a Week longer in this wicked Place. [Exit.

Har. By no means.

Sir Fran. You have us'd me unmercifully.

Har. I don't think it more than you deserve: Pray go in and comfort her over a Dish of Tea.

Lov. Your Ladiship won't leave us.

Har. Not long. [Exeunt.

Enter Lady Absent, who goes to the Glass to adjust herself, Lord Absent behind her.

Lord Abs. Curse upon that Ring she wears; 'tis the same I have often seen upon Sir Francis's Finger: That confirms all; 'tis Folly but to doubt. The Picture and the Letter were enough to have convinc'd any Body but a lethargic Sot, who indolently sleeps his Life away.—— How Innocent she seems, and yet what Guilt there lurks under that settled Face, and those calm Smiles; 'tis so the Artful cover all Deformities that lye brood-
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ing in the dark Labyrinth of the Mind. What I
so much lov'd, I hate to see.

Lady Abs. [*Coming to my Lord*] Oh my Dear,
where have you left Sir *Francis*, and the rest of
the Company?

Lord Abs. Within, I think.

Lady Abs. Will you go to 'em?

Lord Abs. No.

Lady Abs. Why so?

Lord Abs. Because I han't a Mind to it.

Lady Abs. The Blister rises [*aside.*] What's
the Matter? Has any Body disoblig'd you?

Lord Abs. Yes.

Lady Abs. Who?

Lord Abs. Your self.

Lady Abs. I'm sorry for it.

Lord Abs. I don't believe you.

Lady Abs. Indeed it's without Design then.

Lord Abs. You are very Innocent truly.

Lady Abs. I hope you don't doubt it.

Lord Abs. Oh 'tis past all Doubt.

Lady Abs. What can you mean, my Lord?

Lord Abs. What do you mean, my Lady?

Lady Abs. I desire you'd inform me.

Lord Abs. Oh you're inform'd already.

Lady Abs. Of what?

Lord Abs. That——

Lady Abs. Pray go on.

Lord Abs. You are——

Lady Abs. I beseech you.

Lord Abs. A very Woman.

Lady Abs. Pray explain your self.

Lord Abs. A very vile one.

Lady Abs. My Lord, I never expected this
Treatment—— You amaze me.

Lord Abs. You can't guess the Cause.

Lady Abs.

Lady Abf. No, upon my Word, having always liv'd with a strict Care, inveterate Malice can't accuse me of a Misdeed.

Lord Abf. Your Memory's very short: Recollect your self.

Lady Abf. I have no occasion to look back, or fear to have each Thought, each Act, each Word examin'd by the severest Rules that Virtue has laid down.

Lord Abf. Those who dare do ill, want no Assurance to gloss their Crimes. 'A confident Denial is the only Varnish they lay on in hopes to make a Doubt, or artfully to enforce Deception, and baffle Truth.'

Lord Abf. My Lord, I'm certain you can't accuse me of any Things that I have done to your Prejudice, or that can offend the strict Character of Maid or Wife. I have no Secrets, but a clear and open Heart, that all the World may view, and find untainted: A simple Innocence, that wants no Daub to hide the freckly Spots that start in a distemper'd Mind.

Lord Abf. Could you be accounted Just, do you think me so weak to quit my Quiet for restless Jealousy; that Vulture, that Gnawing gives continual Pain, and racks the Soul? No. The Knowledge of your Folly has rais'd Contempt, Disdain and Detestation.— Oh, how mean the Vitious look! Your very Form is chang'd, and you no more have Right to claim a Habitation here. You are like a Limb that's mortify'd, if not cut off and sever'd from the Body, Contagion soon will spread itself, and seize upon the noble Parts; for he who harbours a wanton Wife within his Bosom, becomes a mean Partaker of her Lewdness, and is justly mark'd with Infamy—

Contented, think you, I can be, when I am made a Jest?—— Flee'd at by all Mankind?—— Hark'e, Madam, Sir *Francis*, Sir *Francis*, that Villain—— You have not been too free with him; it may be not granted all; but your Mind's debauch'd, you have receiv'd the Gage; the Challenge is accepted, the Meeting fix'd, and only Opportunity is wanting.—— Perhaps I think too well; and am already made the Fool, the Property to your Incontinence.

Lady Abs. Ridiculous, my Lord! This must be a Pretence. 'You can't be so void of Understanding. A piece of Cunning to gain some End, or try my Temper. What is it you aim at? Inform me: And if I can satisfy you, you need not use these little Stratagems, these round-about Artifices; I'll give you immediate Satisfaction, if in my Power.

'*Lord Abs.* Confusion! Do you think to cajole me, baffle my Reason, persuade me my Senses do not operate. Indeed I have been an easy Fool, careless and indolent; but you have rais'd a Tempest in my Breast, which all your subtle Arts, your Witchcraft cannot lay.'

Lady Abs. It grieves me to teize him; but the Fever must yet be rais'd, to throw off the Malignity. It may be dangerous to let him cool too soon. [aside.

Lord Abs. Well, What Contrivance now? What faint Pretences to excuse your self?

Lady Abs. This is not well to use me thus, Ungenerous and Unkind!—— Is not Sir *Francis* your Friend; did not you introduce him here, gave him that Name; bad him welcome to your Family? Who should dare to receive him in another manner than your Authority commands.

Lord Abs.

Lord Abs. Look, know you this Letter and this Picture? A modest Wife would blush at such a rank Attempt upon her Husband's Honour—— Here are Words as hot as liquid Brass.—— His Picture too, to keep up your loose Desires, and, in his Absence, be the dumb Solicitor of his base Design! Damnation! What Answer can you make, or how pretend to justify your self?

Lady Abs. A meer Piece of Gallantry, which meant no more than Complaisance. You see I made no Secret of it, by the little Care I took to hide 'em.

Lord Abs. 'Twas Accident that made no Secret of it.—— What Ring is that you have upon your Finger? I remember no such I ever gave you, or that I've ever seen you wear it before or since we marry'd till this Day.

Lady Abs. 'Twas his.

Lord Abs. Very well.

Lady Abs. I prais'd and lik'd it.

Lord Abs. True, what then?

Lady Abs. Why—— All that I know——

Lord Abs. Go on.

Lady Abs. Is, he complaisantly took it from off his Finger, and frankly gave it me. What Harm is there in this?

Lord Abs. Oh, none at all.—— No Obligation—— No Return to be made.

Lady Abs. Not that I know of.

Lord Abs. Thou canting Hypocrite!

Lady Abs. Now I perceive you are really Jealous, at which I smile.

Lord Abs. Indeed I am become your Jest.

Lady Abs. We have been full seven Years marry'd, and have I at any Time behav'd my self so ill, to give you a just Cause for such Treatment?

No!

No. But, on the contrary, have liv'd with Circumspection, shun'd all Gallantries; 'ne'er ram-
'bled from your Wing but still, whene'er I went
'Abroad, you knew where to follow me'; look'd
on your Smiles at Home as Happiness, and ne'er
neglected your little Humours, which oppos'd
with Contradiction, might have occasion'd an
Uneasiness; but gave way to 'em all, that I might
please the Man my Happiness of Life depended
on.

Lord Abs. Exquisite Dissembler!

Lady Abs. Do I deserve this for Tenderness,
for Care, for Love and Duty?

Lord Abs. You attempt in vain to excuse your
self.

Lady Abs. I need no Excuse to justify my Con-
duct.

Lord Abs. Would you did not.

Lady Abs. You shall soon be satisfy'd.

Lord Abs. Never.

Lady Abs. Let me but think a little—— Why
to convince you, I'll appoint him to meet me in a
Quarter of an Hour, in the Summer-house, it be-
ing dark; there you shall hear what passes be-
tween us, undiscover'd; then you shall judge how
far I have injur'd you, and what his Intentions
are in this Affair.

Lord Abs. All Artifice and Cunning.

Lady Abs. You will not find it so.

Lord Abs. No doubt I shall.

Lady Abs. Leave it to the Tryal. But calm
your self, then you'll plainly see you have wrong'd
me.

Lord Abs. It cannot be.

Lady Abs.

Lady Abs. Nay, you shall confess it; and if I make it not evident, then cast me from your Bosom, as a Viper you have warm'd to sting you.

Lord Abs. Some new Device.

Lady Abs. By all that's good and just it is not to deceive you.

Lord Abs. No more.

Lady Abs. You shan't deny me.

Lord Abs. Prithee.

Lady Abs. I do intreat you.

Lord Abs. To no purpose.

Lady Abs. Have but a little Patience, and attend the Issue.

[*Exit Lord Abs.*]

To what a Crisis have I brought my self, before I was aware: I am lost indeed, if I prevail not now. Would I had never trifled with him thus far; but now I must go on.

[*Exit.*]

ACT V.

SCENE *continues.*

Enter Sir Francis.

Sir Fran. **S**He'll meet me in a Quarter of an Hour in the Summer House.——

A convenient Place; and in the Dark. Modestly contriv'd to hide her Blushes.—— She's a fine Woman; and who would not sacrifice a hundred Friends to obtain her? What Joy, what Raptures will she give! O Extasy! thou hang'st on every Limb, each Nerve rejoices, and the consenting
Brain

Brain gives Pleasure to the beating Heart. Her Husband's Indolence and dull Neglect ; my Youth and Gayety ; her Charms and soft Desire ; all, all contrive to make her mine ! — What Woman's Proof against combining Nature ? They'll all consent, when close pursu'd. I left the Company unobserv'd ; she said she'd follow me. The Time's near expir'd.

Enter Mrs. Forward.

For. Sir Francis your Servant.

Sir Fran. Oh yours, Mrs. Forward.

For. Come, come, you think I know nothing, but you're mistaken.

Sir Fran. Know ; why what should you know ?

For. Some Affairs that are carrying on in this Family, which if I was trusted in, would go ne'er the worse. I might be more serviceable than you are aware of.

Sir Fran. You are very kind, Mrs. Forward, but I want no Assistance at present.

For. You must not tell me so.

Sir Fran. Faith, I have no Business in your way upon my Hands, at this Time.

For. I can see.

Sir Fran. You are out in your Calculation.

For. No, no, — I have given my self some Concern upon your Account, out of pure Zeal and Respect to you, good Sir Francis, because I know you to be a worthy, generous Gentleman, Sir Francis.

Sir Fran. Oh, it's very obliging. When I have Occasion for you, I'll make Use of your Favours. — These Ladies Women are very necessary Utensils, when a Man wants Conduct and Assurance
to

to carry on his own Intrigue : But I am pretty well furnish'd with both. [*Aside, and Exit.*

For. This is not to be born. — One had better Hawk with *China* about Streets, than be a Lady's Woman thus neglected. I'd have 'em to know we Waiting-women are as necessary in an Intrigue, as an Engineer in a Siege, 'Foregad, they may be mistaken : I'll spring the Mine, let the Mischief light where it will, if it be only for a little Revenge. I hope I have liv'd in better Families than this, and have been Confidant to the Husband and the Wife, the old Lady Mother, and three Grand-Daughters; and all has gone well thro' my Management : What the duce is the Matter, I can't be trusted now in two or three common Form Bus'nesses here ? The Devil take me for a Fool if I let 'em play the Game out quietly, if I don't taste of the Profit. Marry, marry come up truly : These are fine doings indeed ! [*Exit.*

S C E N E *the Summer-House.*

*Enter Sir Francis in the Dark, and Lady Absent ;
Lord Absent following her.*

Sir Fran. Hark—— I hear no body yet. She comes.—— Her soft Tread is Musick to my Ears.
—— Who's there ?

Lady Abs. 'Tis I,—— *Sir Francis ?*

Sir Fran. The same. — Suspicion sleeps, and the kind Night attends, without a Star, to do her Office : ' No glimmering Light to guide the
' prying Eye, but safely cover'd in her dark
' Mantle, we are hid from Accident : While she
' keeps Guard, none can approach to interrupt
' our Happiness.

I

Lady Abs.

Lady Abs. How I tremble !

Sir Fran. You need not fear.

Lady Abs. I can't help it.

Sir Fran. We are secure.

Lady Abs. Never when we do ill.

Sir Fran. You terrify your self with Children's Bugbears.

Lady Abs. My Lord will some time or other discover this.

Sir Fran. No, no.

Lady Abs. Say he should.

Sir Fran. How can it be ?

Lady Abs. I can't tell ; but my Heart misgives me : Would I had not ventur'd so far.

Lord Abs. 'Sdeath ! what can she mean——
but hush—— [Aside.

Sir Fran. That's unkind.

Lady Abs. I shall fear to see him, and expect, when-
e'er he looks me in the Face, or speaks to me,
he'll tax me with my Falshood. The Guilt will
follow my Imagination, and be like the Ghost of
him that's murther'd to the Murtherer ; I shall
betray my self.

Sir Fran. These are like Virgins Fears, who are
frighted at they know not what.

Lady Abs. But then the Honour of his Family,
with which I am entrusted ?

Sir Fran. That's preserv'd by Secrecy.

Lady Abs. But it's horrible to wrong a Husband's
Bed !

Sir Fran. Who does not, d'ye think ?

Lady Abs. All do not, sure.

Sir Fran. O yes.

Lady Abs. And appear modest after it ?

Sir Fran. Ay, that's the Force of Reputation.

Lord Abs. A very moral Gentleman, truly.

Lady Abs. Do you think so ?

Sir Fran.

Sir Fran. I know it to be so.

Lady Abs. My Lord's your Friend, therefore you should not wrong him; it's an Obligation to the contrary.

Sir Fran. The meanness of his Temper makes it no Injury: He's unfit to be a Husband or a Friend.

Lord Abs. Damn him.

[*Aside.*

Lady Abs. You're too ill-natur'd.

Sir Fran. He lives to please himself, careless of every thing but his own Humour. He's so Indolent, he does not know you're beautiful; hears you not whene'er you speak, nor sees you tho' he seems to look at you; and he's but the Figure of a Man: A Statuary might form as good: He Eats, and Drinks, and Sleeps, thro' Custom: He's like a Piece of Clock-work, moves, but thinks of nothing: The Shell of Human Life without a Kernel. Can such a one be thought a Husband or a Friend, who has no Soul, no Spirit, no Taste? You must despise him.

Lord Abs. An insinuating Villain!

[*Aside.*

Lady Abs. For Shame; his Understanding is equal to most Men's: 'His Honour an Ornament to his Title: He's good humour'd, generous, open and undesigning. He would not thus have dealt by you'.

Sir Fran. 'How can you call stupid Dulness Understanding, or praise his Honour when he so basely neglects you. His good Humour's Softness; his Generosity is always misapply'd, for want of Judgment; therefore no Merit in him.——Open and undesigning! Ay, that he is thro' Weakness and Folly': He's not worth rememb'ring, but as the Property, the Screen to keep off Scandal: A necessary Tool, an easy Husband, qualify'd for what he should be made, the Object of your Scorn and my Derision.

Lady Abs. If you respect me, methinks, you should spare him a little.

Sir Fran. Forget him, the Thought of him intrudes unwelcomely; he's not to be born but for your sake; for by pretending Friendship to him, I gain a free Access to you; so far indeed he's useful.

Lord Abs. Consume him—— [Aside.

Lady Abs. But how could you be so confident, to court my Lord's Sister before my Face?

Sir Fran. You know I told you 'twas a Feint upon my Lord, to secure my Approach to you.

Lady Abs. But this is grossly abusing her.

Sir Fran. Pho, pho, a Woman can't be affronted while she's address'd, and her Vanity oblig'd.

Lady Abs. One of her Character should not be trifled with.

Sir Fran. Why does she make Fools of every Body?

Lady Abs. Because they attempt to impose on her.

Sir Fran. We lose Time, and play with Moments of the greatest Worth.

Lord Abs. You'll hardly improve 'em now. [Aside.

Sir Fran. I long to receive Earnest for another Meeting.

Lady Abs. How shall I be satisfy'd you won't deceive me?

Sir Fran. I swear.

Lady Abs. Your Oaths are no Security, but Words of course.

Sir Fran. Why should you doubt your Power to keep what you have conquer'd. I'm yours for ever; let that suffice.

Lady Abs. I can't believe. How oft have you made use of the like Protestations, and thought no more of 'em?

Sir Fran.

Sir Fran. Never.

Lady Abs. You have perswaded——

Sir Fran. Then you are kind.

Lady Abs. My Niece, I mean.

Sir Fran. I don't understand you.

Lady Abs. You won't understand me.

Sir Fran. Meer Imagination.

Lady Abs. Have you not promis'd her Marriage,
and by that means decoy'd her into Ruin?

Lord Abs. Ha!

[*Aside.*

Sir Fran. How came she to know this? [*Aside.*
Only been a little Civil to her.

Lady Abs. She has confess'd it.

Sir Fran. So then, I find there's no Folly but a
Woman will be guilty of. A Changeling! [*Aside.*

Lady Abs. I have sufficient Proof that heard
you both own it; so that I perceive you are ready
to oblige the whole Family.

Lord Abs. Confusion!

[*Aside.*

' *Sir Fran.* There's none I value now but your
' dear self; they are all forgot, and you command
' my very Soul.

' *Lady Abs.* How can you be so wicked! What
' Grounds can you have to expect I should con-
' fide in you? Do you think your Conduct is
' not enough to deter any Woman from ventu-
' ring, tho' she had an Inclination? 'Tis Va-
' riety you pursue, and Possession pass'd, you
' then look forward to the next, neglecting all
' you have gain'd for some new Face. The whole
' Sex is but one Mistress to you, you court 'em
' all, as others do the single She they most admire.

' *Sir Fran.* What's past was only quenching
' Thirst.' But you are the Fountain of all Joy,
that flows with fresh Delights, creating still
Desire to taste again a never dying Repetition of
the

the choicest Sweets that Nature has in store. 'Tis Cruelty to keep me on the Rack, when the Extent of all my Wishes are in you; Desire's too fierce to be contain'd, and longs to revel in your Charms. O you distract me with a Touch of this fair Hand. Methinks I am transform'd my Soul's enlarg'd, Humanity has left me as in a Trance; all is amazing Bliss; it hurries in too fast; it's strong as the last Thought of Love. Oh what must be Possession then.—— Enjoyment's something too exquisite for Words to describe, or beyond Imagination's Power to form. O do not dash me now with Coyness, when all is ripe for Consummation.

Lady Abs. You're insufferably rude. [*takes away her Hand.*]

Sir Fran. I cannot bear a Disappointment now. Why have you encourag'd me with Smiles, receiv'd my Presents, and met me here? To what Intent?—— Come, you are resolv'd; shake off the Qualms, and this affected, formal Niceness, and don't refuse the Pleasure you'll wish to have repeated, when once you've stept beyond your idle Fears. 'Tis Decency in Girls, but Women that know what they come about, should have more Courage. Fie, fie, you must know your own Mind; that's consenting, I'm sure.

Lady Abs. I can't bear this Indecency.

Sir Fran. A little Force will break the Curb of Modesty.

Lady Abs. You won't be so Confident?

Sir Fran. You need not use these little Arts to warm me to your Wish; I am all Love, all yours——enough——you shall consent.

Lady Abs. I'll call my Lord.

Sir Fran. You won't, I'm sure.

Lady Abs.

Lady Abs. You are mistaken.

Sir Fran. You only tell me so.

Lady Abs. I'll cry out.

Sir Fran. Let it be softly then.

Lady Abs. I will by Heavens.

Sir Fran. Your Reputation lies at Stake.

Lady Abs. I care not, let what will happen.

Sir Fran. I'll venture you for once.

Lady Abs. What, will you force me?

Sir Fran. You have more Understanding than to think it so.

Lady Abs. Nay then, help, help, help.

Lord Abs. Villain! unhand her.

Enter Mrs. Forward with Lights; and other Servants, follow'd by Lovell, Lady Harriet, and Mrs. Ruth.

Sir Fran. 'Sdeath, my Lord! — He here.

Lov. What's the Matter, my Lord?

Har. Your Ladyship's disorder'd.

Ruth. *Sir Francis* seems disturb'd; I wonder what can be the Occasion.

Sir Fran. Before gad, my Lord, I am as much surpriz'd as any body; but I believe I can best expound the Riddle. I came by chance in the Dark into the Summer-House, and——passing thro', a Woman ran full-but against me—— I caught her in my Arms—— She cry'd out—— Then, my Lord, you know you enter'd—— They all came with Lights after you—— I was startled to find it to be her Ladyship that cry'd out, and you star'd, my Lord, I suppose, to think how we came together.—— I can't forbear Laughing to see what an Uproar an insignificant Accident has rais'd—— but faith, I'm glad it happen'd so lucky for your Satisfaction: I wou'd not have given

given you Cause to think I would have affronted any of your Family for the Universe.

Lord Abf. Yes I am satisfy'd thou art the greatest Villain Nature ever form'd; so exquisite, that Hell's summ'd up in thee; and to make thee yet more perfect, art a Coward, and therefore below my Sword ——— She, my Wife, brought me hither; made the Appointment to expose you, and I have heard all your base Designs. What, could nothing less than the Ruin of my whole Family gratify your vicious Appetite? First debauch her Niece, court my Sister, and then attempt to force my Wife. — A hopeful Friend indeed!

Har. Horrible!

Lov. Prodigious!

Ruth. How ready they are to fly at a Mistake! ——— But they shan't put me out of Countenance. Come, come, Sir *Francis* is not the Man you take him for.

Har. But he's the Man you took him for, it seems.

Lord Abf. Did I deserve the Character you gave me, I were not fit to live, but ought to be the general Mark to all Mankind, like the blown Deer, left to the Hunter's Rage. ——— 'Sdeath, thou art so mean an Object, my Rage sickens at the Sight of thee, and my Revenge grows Calm, when I but think how much thou art below my Anger. ——— What Honour can be gain'd to Stab a poor defenceless Wretch, that has not Courage to guard his Vices, nor himself.

Lady Abf. You ought to be despis'd by every body; cast out from Human Conversation, for a false Friend, a lewd Debauchee, an Enemy to Virtue ——— What Encouragement did I e'er give, by which you might hope to obtain your wicked
Ends?

End
foun
thou

Sir
me!
cuse.

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Monste
has my
— I
so stup
Friend

Ruth.
cis thus.

Ends? ——— What loose Behaviour have you found in me, thou worthless Creature? Speak if thou can'st.

Sir Fran. In what Confusion has she plung'd me! ——— No way left to make the least Excuse. [*Aside.*

Lady Abs. I beg your Pardon, my Lord, for the Uneasiness I have occasion'd you; but you must now believe I meant no Ill; for all that I design'd was only to raise your Jealousy, by which means I hop'd to cure your Absent, Indolent, Unthinking Temper, expose a Villain, and prevent the Ruin of your Family. ——— It startles me to think what Hazards I have run; for had I not prevail'd on you to meet him here with me in the Dark, and given me that Opportunity to lay him open to your View, I might have forfeited your Esteem for ever, which I value more than all Things under Heaven.

Lord Abs. I'm satisfy'd, my Dear; I blush to think how negligent, how careless I have behav'd to thee: A Provocation one less Virtuous, would have taken the Advantage of, and thought it a Reason for Revenge. ——— But I am bless'd in thee, happy in one so Generous, who could thus both forgive and guard me from so vile a Monster. ——— How has my Reason slept! Where has my Judgment been! Did I not know him? ——— I can't forgive my self. — How could I be so stupid as to think a Vicious Man could make a Friend!

Ruth. Insufferably rude, to abuse poor *Sir Francis* thus. ——— I can't bear it. [*Aside.*

K

Lord Abs.

Lord Abs. I entreat, my Love, you won't lessen your Esteem for me, tho' I own you have some Cause to think too meanly of me: But let it be forgot, thou best of Wives; and I'll atone for all that's past, with Love, with Tenderneſs, and a continual Study how to please you.

Lady Abs. No more, my Lord, my Heart is full of Joy, and I have all that I would ask in you.—— ' With what Delight shall I obey
' when you command, live bleſs'd with Smiles;
' No ſhocking Hand to interpoſe between the
' Repetition of our mutual Vows; but Hours,
' Days and Years ſhall glide away, in one continu'd Course of Conſtancy and Love.

Sir Fran. I may retire without Ceremony, for I don't perceive I have any further Buſineſs here.

Har. You'll take Mrs. Ruth with you, Sir Francis. [Going.]

Ruth. That he can, without your Inſtructions.

Lov. My Lord, you ought to make him do her Juſtice.

Lord Abs. I intend it. [Goes to Sir Francis.]
Hark'e, Sir, you have wrong'd her Ladyſhip's Niece, and muſt make her Satisfaction, that is, marry her.

Sir Fran. How, my Lord, marry her! I beg you'd excuſe me.

Lord Abs. My Honour's concern'd, and I ſhan't put it up. The Injury's done in my Houſe, and I gave you the Opportunity to affront her, by introducing you here; therefore I expect you repair her loſt Reputation, and redreſs the Wrong you have done her and me.

Har. It's

Har. It's a Debt of Honour, and you ought to pay it.

Sir Fran. I have brought myself into a very pretty Dilemma, faith.

Lord Abs. It's in vain to trifle.

Sir Fran. I'll make her a handsome Settlement; let that suffice.

Lord Abs. 'Sdeath, d'you think to have a kept Mistress out of my Family?

Ruth. Have a little Patience, my Lord, I know he esteems me, and will consent. Won't you, Sir Francis?

Har. How can you be so cruel to one that has been so very kind to you?—— Pray, was not I to have a Settlement too?

Sir Fran. Pox of her fleeing. [Aside.]

Lady Abs. And I bless'd with your sweet Person? But now all Hopes are lost, it is but reasonable I should return your honourable Presents. [Gives him the Picture and Ring.]

Har. That's always done, when the Courtship does not succeed.

Lord Abs. Are you determin'd?

Sir Fran. Would I were a hunder'd Leagues at Sea in a Storm, or any where, so I were but out of his Clutches. [aside.] Give me but a Day or two to consider of it.

Lord Abs. Not a Quarter of an Hour.

Sir Fran. Damn'd hard!—— That I had but Courage enough to fight him now.

[Aside.]

Lord Abs. The Potion must be swallow'd.

Ruth. Be perswaded to lay aside the Stumbling block that appears to you so very difficult

to pass over ; and be steadfastly assur'd I shall not occasion you to Repent.

Sir Fran. But *Despair* you will, without Hopes of Redemption.

Ruth. I shall endeavour to please you with sincere Humility.

Har. You have had the Pleasure of a Mistress, and ought to be content with the Mortification, a Wife.

Lov. He has begun at the wrong End of the Entertainment, and eat the Desert first ; that may have pall'd his Appetite.

Lady Abs. No, no, every Thing sits well upon his Stomach ; he has a quick Digestion ; Nothing comes amiss to him but Matrimony.

Har. I dare swear, by that out of Humour Look, Variety would be more pleasing to him, than the same Dish over and over again.

Sir Fran. Why your Ladiship would not bate me to Death ?

Har. Only chastise you till you mend.

Lord Abs. Your Answer.—— 'Tis in vain to prevaricate.—— Are you resolv'd ?

Sir Fran. Why a Plague on't—— What shall I do ? Well, since you are so much out of Humour—— That I should fall into this Whirlpool !—— Well, you say it must be so.

Lord Abs. And you must declare you voluntarily take her for your Wife, before all this Company, that you may have no Pretence to part with her hereafter. [Aside.

Sir Fran.

Sir Fran. Oh, by all means. ——— Gentlemen and Ladies, I do frankly declare, that I take this Gentlewoman to be my Wife, without any manner of Compulsion: That she is my free and voluntary Choice, and think my self blest'd in so virtuous and discreet a Woman, and acknowledge the Obligation I lye under to his Lordship for all his Favours.

Ruth. Now you are an honest, a just, and an upright Man indeed, *Sir Francis.*

Lady Abs. Use her kindly, and I may forget what's past.

Har. And I pardon your intended Injury to me.

Lord Abs. And I not only forgive you, but receive you with Respect.

Lov. It's but reasonable, when he atones so handsomely for his Faults.

Lord Abs. My Chaplain shall give you a Cast of his Office presently.

Sir Fran. There's one Comfort, I shall be kept in Countenance by the major Part of the World, who have either, like me, marry'd their own Mistresses, or some Body's else. ——— But pray give me leave, after all, to return Mrs. Forward thanks, she would fain have lent her Helping Hand, but I, like a Fool, must travel my own Way, and despise an Experienc'd Guide:

Lady Abs. How!

Lord Abs. She wanted to be making a Discovery to me.

Har. And

Har. And would fain have open'd your Ladyship's Secrets to me, supposing you had an Intrigue with Sir *Francis*.

Lady Abs. Very well, Mrs *Forward*, pray leave my House.

Form. The Devil take 'em all. [Exit.

Lord Abs. You see, *Harriet*, how hard it is to judge Right, and you might, perhaps, have made a wrong Choice, all Mankind being indifferent to you: Therefore, if you'll take my Advice, I'd perswade you to receive Mr *Lovell's* Addresses. A Title may be bought, but Honour must be in Nature, and born with a Man. I have long known him; his Virtues sit easy upon him, and are not affected: He's Generous, without Prodigality; loves Pleasure, yet not Vicious; good Natur'd, and a Man of Sense: I recommend him, as the Person that would make you most Happy, and one I should be glad to see your Husband.

Lady Abs. I think my Lord has given him the Character he deserves.

Lov. I am highly oblig'd to you both thus to engage in my Behalf; and would your Ladyship—

Har. Pho, pho, no long Speeches; I know what you would say. My Lord has given his Approbation, and you want my Consent.—
Well, I believe I may, in a short Time, venture to play the Fool, and do what can't be undone, if you don't give me Occasion to change my Mind.

Lord Abs.

The Artful Wife.

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Lord Abs. Then 'tis a Match, and I'll undertake for his good Behaviour. And now, my Dear, I shall always hold it as a true Maxim, that

*Virtue in Women in a marry'd Life,
Alone prevents, or heals Domestick Strife ;
Whate'er the Husband be, she must defend
His, and her Honour, from the faithless Friend.*

F I N I S.





B I L L I

